

**Amendments to the Claims:**

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in this present application.

1. (currently amended) An assembly comprising an elastic sleeve mounted in a radially stretched condition on a ~~tubular~~ hold-out member that extends therebeyond at one end of the sleeve, wherein the ~~tubular~~ hold-out member includes a plurality of regions of weakness extending circumferentially there around and discretely spaced apart along the length thereof.
2. (currently amended) An assembly according to claim 1, wherein the ~~tubular~~ hold-out member is of a substantially right-cylindrical configuration.
3. (currently amended) An assembly according to claim 2, wherein the regions of weakness extend circumferentially substantially perpendicularly to the longitudinal axis of the ~~tubular~~ hold-out member.
4. (currently amended) An assembly according to ~~anyone of the preceding claims~~ claim 1, wherein each region of weakness extends substantially continuously around the ~~tubular~~ hold-out member.
5. (currently amended) An assembly according ~~anyone of the preceding claims~~ to claim 1, wherein the regions of weakness comprise indentations extending into the wall of the ~~tubular~~ hold-out member from an inner surface thereof.
6. (currently amended) An assembly according to ~~anyone of the preceding claims~~ claim 1, wherein the regions of weakness comprise indentations extending into the wall of the ~~tubular~~ hold-out member from an outer surface thereof.
7. (currently amended) An assembly according to ~~anyone of claims 1 to 4~~ claim 1, wherein the regions of weakness comprise indentations extending into the wall of the ~~tubular~~ hold-out member from an inner surface and from an outer surface thereof.

8. (currently amended) An assembly according to claim 7, wherein inner surface indentations alternate with outer surface indentations along the length of the tubular hold-out member.

9. (currently amended) An assembly according to ~~anyone of claims 1 to 4~~ claim 1, wherein the regions of weakness are provided by the tubular hold-out member being of convoluted configuration.

10. (currently amended) An assembly according to claim 7 or ~~claim 8~~, wherein the regions of weakness of the inner surface and of the outer surface of the tubular member are of a different length longitudinally of the tubular hold-out member.

11. (currently amended) An assembly according to ~~claim 9-8~~, wherein the inner regions of weakness are longer than the outer regions of weakness.

12. (currently amended) An assembly according to ~~anyone of the preceding claims~~ claim 1, wherein the regions of weakness comprise[[s]] slits, preferably of substantially rectangular configuration.

13. (currently amended) An assembly according to ~~anyone of the preceding claims~~ claim 1 wherein the ratio of the depth of the regions of weakness transversely to the length of the tubular hold-out member to the separation of the regions of weakness longitudinally of the tubular hold-out member is between about 1:3 and about 2:1.

14. (currently amended) An assembly according to ~~anyone of the preceding claims~~ claim 1, wherein the extension of the tubular hold-out member beyond an end of the elastic sleeve is such that it is arranged to be passed back through the tubular hold-out member to be gripped from the other end, by an operator in use, so as to invert and draw the tubular hold-out member through itself, thus releasing the sleeve from its stretched condition.

15. (currently amended) An assembly according to claim 14, wherein the extension of the tubular hold-out member is at least as long as the sleeve, and ~~preferably longer than the sleeve~~.

16. (currently amended) An assembly according to ~~anyone of the preceding claims~~ claim 1, wherein the ~~tubular hold-out~~ member comprises a thermoplastic material or blends thereof, including cross-linked thermoplastic material.

17. (currently amended) An assembly according ~~anyone of the preceding claims to~~ claim 1, wherein the elastic sleeve comprises an elastomer or a rubber, preferably silicone or EPDM.

18. (cancelled)

19. (cancelled)

20. (cancelled)

21. (cancelled)